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ABSTRACT A survey was undertaken of 53 school leaders and 16 administrators of Special Education as to the functions of a school psychologist to determine what type of psychological services should be given priority. The scale contained 46 clearly and legitimately defined functions which school psychologists might perform within a school district. Evidence from the study indicated that it is possible to devise an instrument which can have high reliability value when used to match school psychological resources and priorities of functions for the psychologists and the consumer (school). The study suggests implications for trainers of school psychologists and employers of school psychologists (consumer/school). (Author)

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THE UTILIZATION OF
CONSUMER CONSENSUS
IN ASSIGNING PRIORITIES
TO THE ALLOCATION OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Historically, school psychological services have been limited mainly to the identification and periodic re-evaluation of children for special education programs and early entrance testing. A brief look at the history of the development of school psychology indicates that the traditional procedures for assisting children have been directed toward individual study and placement. It has become abundantly clear that the traditional procedures are neither meeting the needs of all children with learning and behavioral problems nor assisting the schools in the overall task of meeting the educational needs of children.

A pertinent question frequently posed is "What are the roles and functions of the school psychologist?". According to Bardon and Bennett, (1957) the difficulty that the question presents, in this form, is that it is essentially unanswerable. First there is the problem of semantics or terminology and second there are varied levels of training represented under the rubric of school psychology. As a consequence there are several descriptive job titles representing different levels of competence, functioning and expectation.

New roles for the school psychologist have been frequently suggested in recent years. It has become increasingly evident that if school psychological services are to offer solutions to the broad problems of education, re-evaluation of the services is necessary and bold attempts for major involvement in the total educational environment are required. Consequently, the school psychologist has been seen as a change agent,

development specialist, curriculum consultant, teacher trainer and vocational specialist as well as the traditional diagnostician, the therapeutic agent. (Bennett, 1970; Boehm and Weinberg, 1970; Catterall, 1970; Gilmore and Chandy; Hohenshil, 1974; Hymen and Myers, 1973; and Thomas, 1972). Such contemporary roles tend to be preventive in nature rather than diagnostic or remedial.

The school psychologist is that psychologist who has chosen to work in the school, a most difficult and important setting. Until fairly recently it has not been possible to expand very much on the relatively narrow conception of school psychological services. Although many state departments of education mandated the use of psychologists, the number of psychologists employed by schools still appears too small to handle the majority of school-learning problems.

If school psychology is to make an effective and meaningful contribution to the total school system and if psychological resources are limited, decisions must be made regarding the allocation of these limited resources in order to maximize their effectiveness. This is of importance because duties of the school psychologist of the future cannot adequately be described or predicted (Bardon and Bennett, 1974). He will be doing different things in different schools because of the school's perception of his role and training. This is true due to the dynamics of pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher, teacher-teacher, and teacher-administrators interactions.

A constant goal on the part of the school district personnel had been to evaluate their psychological services. The goal has been to communicate with the regional school staff, particularly school administrators and teachers, to compare impressions of needs and plans for the future. It is recognized that the needs of different districts will vary as well as their readiness to accept broader functions. This study attempts to determine

school psychological services functions by utilizing consumer consensus in assigning priorities to the allocation of school psychologist resources. The survey could also serve the purpose of helping school district personnel in maximum utilization of their psychological resources which in most cases are limited.

METHODOLOGY

The survey included a random sample of 53 teachers from all grades, K-12, as well as 16 administrators (superintendents, supervisors, and principals) from five school districts. School psychologists were not included in the study because of time (inadequate sample). The scale contained 46 clearly defined and legitimate functions which school psychologists might perform within school districts. The scale was organized on a three point system ranging from very important activities, to important activities, to not important activities of school psychologists. The items were obtained from the literature, interviews with school psychologists, principals and superintendents and from the author's experience.

The instrument was administered to each of the subjects at a time convenient to them. Their responses were then coded onto Opscan coding sheets which were in turn translated into keypunched cards. The computer program, Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (1970), as well as the Appalachian State University Attitude Test Scoring Program (1974) was utilized to analyze the data.

RESULTS

An odd-even split halves correlation coefficient with a correction for attenuation was used to assess the reliability of the instrument for each group. The coefficients were found to be .9170 for the teachers and .9265 for the administrators.

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The items were ranked in order of importance by frequency of response for each of the groups. Tied ranks resulted in many cases.

Insert Table I About Here

Kendall's tau with a correction for ties was used to obtain a measure of correlation between the rankings of the teachers and administrators. This was found to be .7723 which with an N of 46 is significant at the .001 level. As a check Spearman's rho was computed utilizing the same data. The correlation coefficient was .9125 which again was significant at the .001 level.

Table II contains the 10 most important functions which superintendents and supervisors perceived school psychologists as performing.

Insert Table II About Here

By analyzing the 10 major functions, it appears that administrators tend to perceive the school psychologist as a member of the administrative staff with emphasis on child study services and staff development activities, in that order. The present finding seems to indicate that administrators tend to place great emphasis on the school psychologist's role as a program developer and quality control engineer for their Special Education Program.

The top 10 functions of the school psychologist according to teachers are presented in Table III. Analysis of the data contained in Table III

Insert Table III About Here

seems to indicate that major functions which teachers' perceive school psychologists as performing are strongly related to direct services to the child and the teacher (child study). It was especially interesting to note that the teacher tended to emphasize functions which were directly related to the child's success in school (educational programming - intervention).

Examination of the data in Table II and III indicates a rather high agreement between administration and teachers as to specific functions of the school psychologist. Some difference of opinion seems to exist between the administrators and teachers in regard to specific staff development topics and educational programming as related to Special Education and main-streaming. It was interesting to note that neither group applied much emphasis or weight to research activities. Consultation activities were given some priority by the teachers.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study indicates that it is possible to devise an instrument which can have high reliability value when it is used to match school psychological resources and priorities of functions for the psychologist and the consumer (school). Teachers' assumptions about the school psychologist's functions warrant investigation because of the influence these assumptions are likely to have on teachers' choices of pupils to refer to the psychologists, their receptiveness of his recommendations, and their readiness to enter into various kinds of working relationships with the psychologist. In general, teacher responses to the questionnaire tended to reflect those opinions which prevail in current professional literature about the school psychologist's role and indicated a degree of agreement between

supervisory personnel and teachers as to the role and functions of the school psychologist.

Analysis of the findings from such surveys would enable the school personnel to obtain maximum utilization of their school psychological resources. The agreement between groups might vary but there would be little difficulty in deciding what functions are to receive first priority. Utilization of such findings could help university trainers to better prepare their product for the consumer by matching expected functioning with various training components of their program.

It seems clearly established that the selected 46 functions that a school psychologist might perform in his work, represents the five areas of competence according to Green (1974), and could be placed under each area-role model with a high degree of reliability. The value to be gained from discovering role preference of teachers, administrators, psychologists or other pupil personnel workers would be in how the data would be utilized. Implication for trainers of school psychologists, employers of school psychologists and establishing role functions for school psychologists which meet the needs of a school district are implied. Emphasis should not be placed on discussing our role but upon how we can utilize this information for the improvement of delivering psychological services to students, parents and educators.

TABLE 1

ITEM RANKINGS ON A SURVEY
OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS
FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
1. Assist in the identification of individuals for special programs such as the Educable Mentally Retarded, deaf, orthopedically handicapped, and learning disorders.	3.5	1.5
2. Periodical re-evaluations of children in special programs.	6.5	7.0
3. Assist in the identification of Trainable Mentally Retarded children for school inclusion	3.5	12.0
4. Evaluations of children for early entrance to school	40.5	38.5
5. Individual counseling with students	16.5	16.0
6. Group counseling with students	33.0	32.5
7. Conducting psycho-educational diagnostic interviews with students	16.5	21.5
8. Provide a screening program for school readiness with appropriate recommendations for educational programming of children	16.5	18.0
9. Make recommendations for the educational programming of children after completing an individual psychological evaluation	3.5	3.5
10. Participate in parent conferences with child's parents after a psychological evaluation	3.5	5.0
11. Conferences with teachers and principals concerning results of an individual psychological evaluation	9.0	1.5
12. Parent conferences to assist the parents in solving home related problems	16.5	9.5
13. Conduct in-service education sessions for teachers in areas such as nature of psychological evaluations, services of school psychologists, mental growth and intelligence, and use of group tests	9.0	9.5

TABLE 1 (Continued)

ITEM RANKINGS ON A SURVEY
OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS
FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
14. Conduct in-service education sessions for teachers in areas such as child development and principles of learning	23.5	25.0
15. Conduct in-service education sessions for teachers in areas such as teacher-student communication, classroom meetings, assisting students to understand self and others, assessment of classroom climate, and mental health in the classroom	12.0	19.5
16. Conduct in-service education sessions for teachers in areas of conducting parent-teacher conferences and working effectively with parents	23.5	25.0
17. Conducting in-service education sessions for teachers in areas of needs of handicapped children and handling the disturbed child in the classroom	6.5	8.0
18. Conducting in-service education sessions for teachers in areas of classroom management, individual assessment of academic skill development with implications for instruction and development of behavioral objectives and criteria based evaluations	12.0	13.0
19. Consultant to school counselors	23.5	23.0
20. Consultant to principals	29.5	30.0
21. Consultant to teachers	16.5	11.0
22. Consultant to central office administration	23.5	36.0
23. Consultant on curriculum committees	29.5	36.0
24. Conducting research projects in the school	40.5	44.0
25. Liaison with the Mental Health Center	23.5	14.5

TABLE 1 (Continued)

ITEM RANKINGS ON A SURVEY
OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS
FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
26. Liaison with the Welfare Department and Children's Services	29.5	25.0
27. Liaison with community service organizations	36.0	32.5
28. Identification of and assist in development of programs for gifted children	23.5	17.0
29. Making presentations at PTA's and community service organizations	43.0	43.0
30. Conducting educational psychology information sessions with parents	45.5	32.5
31. Conducting parent education workshops in children management	36 .0	21.5
32. Teach courses in psychology at the secondary level	43.0	42.0
33. Making presentation in regular classes and at school club meetings	45.5	46.0
34. Give direct assistance to individual child, parent, or family in time of crisis or disorientation	12.0	6.0
35. Generate proposals and complete specific planning, writing, and follow through to obtain state or federal funds for research projects and programs for exceptional children	33.0	28.0
36. Be a consultant to the district group testing committee	33.0	40.0
37. Process order group tests, distributing testing materials to teachers, and collecting and organizing answer sheets to be sent for scoring	38.5	45.0
38. Train others to administer group tests	38.5	36.0
39. Analyze and interpret group tests so as to make recommendations for change in instructional techniques and methodology	23.5	28

TABLE 1 (Continued)

ITEM RANKINGS ON A SURVEY
OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS
FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

<u>Item</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
40. Recommend, plan and execute system-wide group testing program	36.0	41.0
41. Plan and implement district-wide procedure for assisting the learning needs of students and recommending strategies for increasing learning efficiency	16.5	19.5
42. Coordinate efforts of the school in primary mental health work	23.5	32.5
43. Assist in bringing together students and teachers who can work together most effectively	29.5	28.0
44. Develop programs for exceptional children within the mainstream of education	9.0	14.5
45. Work closely with a placement committee that recommends a child for special education services	1.0	3.5
46. Counsel with groups of basically normal adolescents using positive group interaction to aid mental health growth	43.0	38.5

Kendall's tau = .7725 *
Spearman's rho = .9125 *

* $p = < .001$

TABLE II

Major Functions as Ranked by Administrators

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>RANK</u>
45	1.0
1	3.5
3	3.5
9	3.5
10	3.5
2	6.5
17	6.5
11	9.0
13	9.0
44	9.0
15	12.0
18	12.0

TABLE III

Major Functions of School Psychologists as Ranked by Teachers

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>RANK</u>
1	1.5
11	1.5
45	3.5
9	3.5
10	5.0
34	6.0
2	7.0
17	8.0
12	9.5
13	9.5
21	11.0
3	12.0

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